

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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R 190755Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8219
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMCONSUL MEDAN
AMCONSUL SURABAYA
USICA WASHDC
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 JAKARTA 5058

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, ID, SOPN
SUBJECT: THE MUSLIMS AND THE GOVERNMENT

REF: (A) JAKARTA 4851 (DTG 140716Z APR 78),
(B) JAKARTA 4803 (DTG 130926Z APR 78),
(C) JAKARTA 4090 (DTG 300926Z MAR 78),
(D) JAKARTA 3814 (DTG 230935Z MAR 78)

1. SUMMARY. INDONESIA'S POLITICALLY-ORIENTED MUSLIMS
ARE VERY APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A GOVERN-
MENT CRACKDOWN. THE RECENT ARREST OF SEVERAL MUSLIM
OPPOSITIONISTS AND THE BOMBING OF A JAKARTA MOSQUE HAVE
ADDED TO AN ALREADY GROWING TENSION AND REINFORCED THE
MUSLIMS' PERSECUTION COMPLEX. THE MUSLIMS, DIVIDED BY
INTERNAL WRANGLING OVER MPR TACTICS, ARE PUZZLING OVER
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AN EFFECTIVE POST-MPR STANCE VIS-A-VIS THE GOVERNMENT.
ALTHOUGH MUSLIM SOURCES PROJECT A MORE OPENLY OPPOSITION-
IST STANCE IN THE LONGER TERM, THEY PREDICT (AND WE AGREE)
THAT CAUTION WILL PREVAIL IN THE SHORT RUN, UNTIL THE
GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS TOWARD POLITICAL ISLAM CRYSTALLIZE.
THE IMMEDIATE PROSPECT IS FOR SIMMERING UNEASINESS, AS
THE MUSLIMS TRY TO GET THEIR OWN HOUSE IN ORDER, KEEP

OPEN LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT AND AVOID DOING ANYTHING UNDULY PROVOCATIVE, IN THE HOPE THAT THE GOVERNMENT STANCE WILL GRADUALLY MODERATE. END SUMMARY.

2. THERE IS GREAT APPREHENSION IN ISLAMIC POLITICAL CIRCLES ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A NEW GOVERNMENT CRACK-DOWN ON MUSLIMS, AIMED AT ELIMINATING OR INTIMIDATING MUSLIM OPPOSITIONISTS AND/OR GETTING REVENGE FOR MUSLIM INTRANSIGENCE DURING THE MPR. MANY MUSLIMS VIEW THE RECENT DETENTION OF SEVERAL PROMINENT ISLAMIC POLITICOS (SEE REFERENCES A AND B) AS ONLY THE FIRST ACT IN A DRAMA IN WHICH MUSLIMS ARE CAST AS THE "HEAVIES" AND IN WHICH MANY OF THEM COULD END UP IN JAIL OR STRIPPED OF ANY WORTHWHILE ROLE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS.

3. A TNT BOMB EXPLODED BY UNKNOWN PARTIES ON APRIL 14 IN JAKARTA'S NEW SHOWPIECE ISLAMIC MOSQUE HIKED TENSION ANOTHER NOTCH AND FUELED THE ALREADY STRONG MUSLIM PERSECUTION COMPLEX. SENIOR ISLAMIC LEADERS, FEARING THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT CHARGE DISSIDENT MUSLIMS WITH THE ACT AND USE IT AS A PRETEXT FOR NEW REPRESSION, RUSHED TO CONDEMN THE BOMBING AND DISAVOW ANY MUSLIM INVOLVEMENT. DR. HAMKA, CHAIRMAN OF THE CNCIL OF ULAMA (RELIGIOUS PROPAGATION), TRIED TO TAKE THE HAT OFF THE MUSLIMS BY BLAMING THE BOMBING ON THE COMMUNISTS, INCLUDING SOME OF LAST DECEMBER'S POLITICAL PRISONER RELEASEES. THE GOVERNMENT SO FAR IS CONFIDENTIAL

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BEING CLOSED-MOUTH ABOUT THE INCIDENT, SAYING ONLY THAT ONE PERSON WAS SERIOUSLY INJURED, DAMAGE TO THE MOSQUE WAS MINOR AND ONE UNNAMED 42 YEAR OLD MAN IS UNDER INVESTIGATION BECAUSE HIS IDENTIFICATION CARD WAS FOUND NEAR THE EXPLOSION SITE. A SPOKESMAN FOR THE JAKARTA SECURITY COMMAND (LAKSUS) TOLD THE PRESS THAT IT IS "TOO EARLY TO TELL" WHETHER THE BOMBING IS RELATED TO THE MARCH 20 JAKARTA FIREBOMBINGS ATTRIBUTED TO AN ISLAMIC YOUTH GROUP (SEE REFERENCES C AND D).

4. MUSLIMS FACE A DILEMMA IN MEETING WHAT THEY PERCEIVE TO BE A THREAT FROM THE GOVERNMENT. MUSLIM SOURCES PRIVATELY INDICATE TO US THAT THEY REGARD THE 1977 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AND THE MPR AS A POLITICAL WATERSHED, IN WHICH POLITICAL ISLAM, IN THE FORM OF THE UNITY DEVELOPMENT PARTY (PPP), STAKED OUT A CLEARLY (ALBEIT MODERATELY) OPPOSITIONIST STANCE. IN THEIR VIEW, THE PARTY CANNOT RETREAT FROM THAT STANCE WITHOUT LOSING CREDIBILITY WITH ITS CONSTITUENTS. AS ONE PROMINENT PPP MEMBER PUT IT, "THE MUSLIM MASSES WILL NOT LET US FORGET THE PROMISES WE MADE TO THEM DURING THE CAMPAIGN." ANOTHER PPP LEADER GAVE A SECOND RATIONALE FOR MUSLIM OPPOSITION, SAYING,

COOPERATE WITH SUHARTO ANY MORE, SINCE HE WON'T COOPERATE WITH US.

5. ON THE OTHER HAND, MUSLIMS RECOGNIZE THEY ARE RELATIVELY POWERLESS IN THE FACE OF NEW GOVERNMENT REPRESSION. THEY HAVE NO MILITARY ALLIES AND NO LEGISLATIVE CHECK ON THE GOVERNMENT. THEIR ONLY LEGAL POLITICAL VEHICLE, THE PPP, IS STILL LICKING THE WOUNDS OF INTER-PARTY WRANGLING OVER MPR TACTICS AND DISAGREEMENT OVER WHETHER TO ACCEPT A GOVERNMENT OFFER TO REINSTALL PARTY LEADER IDHAM CHALID AS CHAIRMAN OF PARLIAMENT. THEY HAVE ATTEMPTED TO FORGE A COMMON STRATEGY USING THE REGIONAL AND LOCAL ULAMA COUNCILS AS COORDINATING BODIES -- THE JAKARTA AND WEST JAVA COUNCILS HAVE RECENTLY MET AND, ACCORDING TO A RELIABLE
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SOURCE, THE EAST AND CENTRAL JAVA COUNCILS WILL HOLD A JOINT MEETING APRIL 20. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCE, HOWEVER, THESE MEETINGS ARE TOO UNWIELDY AND ARGUMENTATIVE TO BE REALLY EFFECTIVE.

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6. MUSLIMS SOURCES SUGGEST THAT THIS COMBINATION OF CIRCUMSTANCES DICTATES THAT MUSLIMS BE VERY CAUTIOUS POLITICALLY IN THE SHORT RUN, UNTIL GOVERNMENT INTENTIONS TOWARD POLITICAL ISLAM CRYSTALLIZE. ONE OF THE MUSLIM POLITICIANS CITED ABOVE DESCRIBED ISLAMIC SHORT TERM STRATEGY AS THREE-PRONGED: (1) TRY TO UNIFY MUSLIM POLITICAL FORCES; (2) DO NOTHING TO PROVOKE THE PALACE OR THE ARMY; AND (3) TRY TO KEEP OPEN LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT. THE SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE FIRST AND SECOND "PRONGS" ARE TO SOME DEGREE CONTRADICTORY AND ALL THREE WILL BE VERY DIFFICULT TO ACCOMPLISH. HE DOES TAKE SOME HOPE, HOWEVER, FROM THE FACT THAT THE PPP HAS UNDERTAKEN A SO FAR SATISFACTORY DIALOGUE WITH THE NEW MINISTER OF RELIGION, LT. GEN. (RET.) ALAMSYAH, AND AT LEAST A TEMPORARY MODUS VIVENDI HAS BEEN ACHIEVED ON THE CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE OF PPP TREATMENT OF THE JAVANESE
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MYSTICAL BELIEFS (KEPERCAYAAN) ISSUE. ACCORDING TO THIS SOURCE, THE PPP, WITH ALAMSYAH'S TACIT AGREEMENT, WILL ADOPT THE POSITION WITH ITS OWN CONSTITUENTS THAT THE PARTY DOESN'T MORALLY ACCEPT KEPERCAYAAN BUT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT ALL MPR DOCUMENTS ARE LEGALLY BINDING.

7. DESPITE THIS GLIMMER OF OPTIMISM, THE THREE-PRONGED STRATEGY LISTED ABOVE SEEMS TO ADD UP TO A NEAR PARALYSIS OF EFFECTIVE ISLAMIC POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN THE SHORT RUN. MUSLIMS ARE CLEARLY VERY MUCH ON THE DEFENSIVE AND UNSURE OF THEIR NEXT MOVE. UNTIL THEY GET THEIR OWN HOUSE IN BETTER ORDER -- NO EASY TASK -- AND UNTIL THE GOVERNMENT EITHER DROPS THE OTHER SHOE OR PUTS THE FIRST ONE BACK ON, THE MUSLIMS' "NEXT MOVE" IS LIKELY TO BE NO MOVE AT ALL.

8. WHILE IT IS THUS CLEAR TO US, AS WELL AS THE MUSLIMS, THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS THE INITIATIVE, WE ARE NOT CONFIDENT ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF FUTURE GOVERNMENT PLANS. THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT MUSLIM CONCERNS ABOUT NEW GOVERNMENT REPRESSION ARE NOT ENTIRELY UNFOUNDED. CERTAINLY THE RECENT ARRESTS COULD BE READ IN THIS LIGHT. WE BELIEVE THERE IS A SOMEWHAT STRONGER POSSIBILITY, HOWEVER, THAT THE ARRESTS ARE PRIMARILY INTENDED AS A WARNING AND WON'T BE BROADENED INTO A MASSIVE CRACKDOWN. INSTEAD, A SIMMERING HOSTILITY AND MUTUAL SUSPICION SEEMS LIKELY TO CHARACTERIZE GOVERNMENT-MUSLIM RELATIONS OVER THE NEXT MONTHS. THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE PERIODICALLY TO HARASS AND PRESSURE THE MUSLIMS, WHILE TRYING TO WIN MORE PLIABLE PPP MEMBERS WITH FAVORS AND REWARDS. ALTHOUGH THIS WILL NOT KEEP HARD-CORE MUSLIM OPPOSITIONISTS FROM TRYING

TO USE THE PARLIAMENT AND OTHER CHANNELS TO EXPRESS THEIR
DISCONTENT, IT WILL KEEP MUSLIMS IN GENERAL OFF-BALANCE AND
DEFENSIVE AND LIMIT THEIR ABILITY TO FILL THE OPPOSITION
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